

Students Experiencing Homelessness

Defined:

Based on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is the federal law created to support the enrollment and education of homeless students. McKinney-Vento is intended to provide homeless students the same educational opportunities as housed students by removing as many barriers to learning for homeless students as possible

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This definition includes (but is not limited to) children who are:

- Sharing housing due to economic hardship or loss of housing (e.g. doubled-up).
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or campgrounds (due to a lack of adequate alternative accommodations)
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.- Sleeping in places unfit for human habitation (e.g. park benches).
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, etc

* A national study found that at least 14% of community college students experience homelessness. These students face incredible barriers to accessing and completing post-secondary education, including lack of adult support, housing, health care, and food, as well as histories of trauma, abuse, and neglect.

* Compared to their peers, homeless college students experience higher levels of anxiety and poorer physical health and have less access to nutritional food.

* Basic needs insecurity has a direct impact on student academic success. These students are much more likely not to buy textbooks, and when it comes to class, they are more likely to miss, drop, or fail classes or withdraw from school entirely.

*2023 Data

Barriers to Finishing a Degree

Aside from the obvious financial obstacles, homeless students frequently encounter various unique challenges. Some of the top issues include:

- Securing stable housing,
- Gaining a job to supplement financial aid packages,
- Finding reliable transportation, and
- Receiving academic support



STUDENTS WITH
unique or special
circumstances

Access and Equity Considerations & Additional Information



STUDENTS WITH
unique or special
circumstances

Access and Equity Considerations:

To equitably serve all students, institutions must first identify students experiencing homelessness and then apply the structures and practices that address and eliminate educational disparities in this student population.

- Allow safe places on campus for homeless students, meaning a designated and protected parking lot if they sleep in cars or a safe place to shower and get ready.
- Train faculty and staff on the signs and how to recognize homelessness.
- Provide holistic support services.
- Extend the benefits of a guiding liaison to homeless college students.
- Ensure homeless college students will have someone to point them in the right direction and provide guidance that parents, guardians, or mentors of housed students would provide.
- Provide housing in between traditional college term schedules.
- Guarantee college students experiencing homelessness have priority access to on-campus housing, when available.
- Establish coordination between financial aid offices, student support services, and campus housing.
- Identify and eliminate any stigmas related to homelessness.
- Remove any barriers to basic needs insecurity programs and the services provided.
- Consider waiving college cost requirements for admission or providing emergency aid or micro-grants for these costs.
- Use some on-campus housing spaces for short-term emergency housing for homeless students. If schools do not have on-campus housing, partner with local hotels and motels to offer homeless students subsidized vouchers for temporary stays.

Additional Information:

Organizations

- National Alliance to End Homelessness
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEH CY)
- National Center for Excellence in Homeless Services
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
- Texas Health and Human Services

Initiatives

- Basic Needs Insecurity (BNI) Programs The five most prevalent BNI services on campus were:
 - 1) emergency financial aid
 - 2) housing
 - 3) hygiene kits
 - 4) locations to shower
 - 5) foster youth programs.)

Services

- Homeless Liaison Toolkit
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) Education Goals and Supports: A Guided Discussion Tool
- Single Stop.
- Texas Homeless Network (THN)

Current Literature, Research and Information



Current Literature and Research:

- Basic Needs Insecurity in Texas Community Colleges Landscape Analysis. By Texas Success Center. July 2023.
- Best Practices in Homeless Education: Increasing Access to Higher Education for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Information for Colleges and Universities. By the National Center for Homeless Education. 2023.
- Campus of Opportunity: A Qualitative Analysis of Homeless Students in Community College. By Jarrett Gupton. 2017.
- College Ready, Hungry, and Homeless. By Mónica Henestroza, Carlos Alcala, Jeanice Warden, and Kevin Powers. July 2018.
- Community Colleges and Student Housing Insecurity: New Strategies for Student Success. Author Unk. n.d.
- Homelessness in Texas: A Snapshot. By Anja Taylor. n.d.
- Homeless Youth and College. By Affordable Colleges Online Staff. 2023.
- Housing Insecurity and Homelessness Among College Students. By Natalie Butler and Francis Torres. Aug. 2023
- Support Extending Liaisons to College Students Experiencing Homelessness. By Texas Appleseed. n.d.
- The impacts of college student homelessness. By Brian Soika. Dec. 2021.
- Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness. By Barbara Duffield. n.d.

Information:

There are two types of homeless college students: those who entered school while homeless and those who became homeless while already in attendance. These students come from varied backgrounds, but research shows there are several reasons for their situations.

- **Economic insecurity:** Students who come from a home lacking consistent or ample income can quickly find themselves homeless should a parent or guardian lose their job.
- **Lack of parent or guardian:** Kids who grew up in the foster system face significant challenges when aging out, especially in securing safe and permanent housing.
- **Kicked out or ran away from home:** The National Runaway Safeline reports that between 1.6 and 2.8 million kids run away from their homes every year. Reasons vary, but frequently include episodes of sexual or physical abuse, conflict with parents, pregnancy or being kicked out for coming out to their families.